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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
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INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2240
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9262
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7517
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5353
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3673
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5278
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0139
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0128
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4400
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9824
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 7113
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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3976
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000011

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: ELECTIONS UPDATE NO.5

REF: A. COLOMBO 7

[1](#)B. 2009 COLOMBO 1152

[1](#)C. 2009 COLOMBO 1145

[1](#)D. 2009 COLOMBO 1139

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

TNA Announces Support for Fonseka

[1](#)1. (C) TNA Leader R. Sampanthan announced late afternoon on January 6 that the TNA would support Fonseka in the presidential election. A written statement by Sampanthan outlining the decision focused almost exclusively on President Rajapaksa, ending by saying it was important to defeat him, and this could be done by voting for Fonseka. A total of 18 TNA Members of Parliament (MPs) were reported in attendance at the news conference. Ambassador is meeting late on January 7 with Sampanthan, and Post will report on this meeting via Septel.

Ambassador Hosts Elections-Monitor
Briefing for Chiefs of Mission

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador hosted a briefing for approximately 20 Heads of Mission on the evening of January 6, with presentations and a question and answer session with representatives from the three main domestic elections monitoring organizations, CMEV, CAFE and PAFFREL. (Note: The USG through USAID is providing financial support for all three organizations for this presidential election. End Note.) The main points raised by the monitoring groups included numerous violations of elections law by the government, including misuse of government property, employees, and state media. They reported higher levels of

violence than in recent past elections, with a concentration in the Hambantota area in the South, and said they expected violence to increase further as the election date approached.

They said they were encouraged by some steps taken by the Elections Commissioner in cracking down on campaign sign violations and illegal transferring of civil authorities, but the power of the state to impact the elections remained very strong. When asked by one Head of Mission what the diplomatic community could do to support a free and fair election, all three groups said they should bolster the Elections Commissioner and encourage him to exercise his powers and keep taking an active and forceful role in the campaign. The representative from CMEV, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, also the director of Centre for Policy Alternatives, said he felt that a groundswell of support for "change", could indeed lead to a Fonseka victory.

Fonseka Manifesto

¶3. (C) The Fonseka campaign released what it called the Vishvasaneeya Venasak, or Fonseka Manifesto, at a press event in Colombo on January 7. A multi-page, glossy color brochure, it outlines in very western-sounding, almost Obama-esque campaign language what Fonseka plans to achieve if elected. "Believable change" is the underlying theme, with promises of an end to corruption, and the citing of academic estimates on how much corruption has cost the Sri Lankan economy. Additional promises are made for ethnic reconciliation, a more democratic society, a free media, and an end to the "white van" culture of disappearances and extra-judicial executions. Contacts within the campaign have told Post they are printing the brochure in all three languages and plan to distribute it widely.

A-9 open 24 hours a day

¶4. (C) The government announced the A-9 highway from Vavuniya

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to Jaffna would now be open for private vehicle travel 24 hours a day. Travel had previously been restricted at night.

Batticaloa Mayor declares for Fonseka?

¶5. (C) A contact in the East told Post on January 7 that the Mayor of Batticaloa, an outspoken and nominally TMVP official who was previously rumored to have been married to Douglas Devananda, would announce she was supporting Fonseka in the election. Some observers have said that though top TMVP officials may say they are supporting the President, TMVP voters on the ground are likely to vote for Fonseka.

Currency regulations changed for Rajapaksas?

¶6. (C) The government changed currency regulations several days ago, allowing Sri Lankan citizens to invest money in banks overseas. While this may be in keeping with general principles of economic liberalization, one contact told Post this move was taken primarily to allow the Rajapaksas to move their personal fortune overseas in the event they lost the election. This is likely to be pure speculation, but gives an indication of the sorts of rumors flowing around the political scene of Colombo.

BUTENIS